

Christian Community

A Program Service of the Council for Social Action of the
Congregational Christian Churches, 289 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.,
and the Commission on Christian Social Action of the
Evangelical and Reformed Church, 2969 West 25th St., Cleveland 13, Ohio

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THESE QUESTIONS—

are frequently asked in varying forms of the Agricultural Relations Secretary and members of the Agricultural Relations Committee of the Council for Social Action:

What do you mean by Agricultural Relations?

Why is the church getting interested in these matters which really belong to the fields of economics and politics?

What is the difference between the C.S.A.'s Agricultural Relations program and the Town and Country Church program of the respective home missions boards of Congregational Christian and Evangelical and Reformed denominations?

What kind of agricultural program do you stand for anyway?

How do you go about to implement a Christian Agricultural Relations program?

THE ANSWERS—

we hope, will be clearer to you after you read this brief statement. Our explanation and justification, like any substantial structure, has four foundation pillars:

A conviction about the responsibility of the Christian

An analysis of the field of agricultural relations

An application of Christian teaching

A program of education and action

WHOSE BUSINESS IS IT?

Before you lay this article aside with the thought, "Oh, this is something for farmers, or rural preachers—not for me," consider this:

Once a week, on the average, you repeat the Lord's Prayer.

It says, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Where does your daily bread come from, and how?

That phrase of the Lord's Prayer once was a prayer about the weather.

Today it is a petition about:

The weather and the farmer

The national transportation system

The food industries

The national credit and finance structure

The national merchandising establishment

Congress and the Department of Agriculture

If you eat food and wear clothes—

If you vote, or ought to but don't—

THIS STORY IS FOR YOU!

OUR DAILY BREAD

Christian Agricultural Relations What? Why? How?

By SHIRLEY E. GREENE

1. A Conviction About the Responsibility of the Christian

We believe that the Christian religion combines a faith and an ethic for every aspect of human life, including every level of human relationship. The Christian faith holds the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to be the creator, the sustainer and the sovereign of the universe and all its functions, of man and all his functions. Man is God's creation, endowed with freedom yet called to loyalty and obedience to God's supreme will. Man's highest duty and greatest pleasure lies in the discovery and acceptance of the will of God.

The Christian ethic defines human good as that pattern of human behavior and that structure of human relations

which most nearly conforms to the will of God. The Kingdom of God is that society in which the will of God is the supreme desire of His creatures. The highest revelation given to us concerning God's will is contained in that which Our Lord declared to be the foremost of all the laws: Thou shalt love God with all thy might; and thy neighbor as thyself.

In the Kingdom to which we are committed, love, translated as "good will," is the ultimate value toward which all other human values must contribute. We believe that the Christian has a primary responsibility to seek and to do this revealed will of God in every arena of life—not only in private, personal and family relations, but equally in the vocational, business, commercial, political and social relations which in



A group of dairy farmers and neighbors associated with the Emerald Grove, Wisconsin, Congregational Christian Church. These men, under the leadership of Pastor Louis Poppe, met regularly for several months this winter to study and discuss "What does it mean to be a Christian dairy farmer?" Their findings, in mimeographed form, are available from the Reverend Shirley E. Greene, Merom, Indiana.

RURAL LIFE SUNDAY

Protestant and Roman Catholic churches throughout the country will join in observing Rural Life Sunday on May 14th. A special order of service, prepared by Dr. Gaius Glenn Atkins, may be secured from the denominational home mission boards or from the Committee on Town and Country, 297 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y., at 5 cents each, \$1 per 100, special rates for larger quantities.

their totality constitute "community" and "society."

Humbly we acknowledge that as humans we never fully comprehend the will of God nor fully achieve His Kingdom. The limitations of knowledge, the failures of goodwill and the ever-present influence of self-centeredness keep us all bound to earth and to sin so that we must ever seek God's forgiveness and His further leading. Therefore, no program which we or any other human group may conceive for the economic, the political or the social order is to be regarded as the will of God or the embodiment of His Kingdom. Our best efforts are but faint approximations and require constant criticism and revision. Nevertheless we must stand and we must strive for that which we now know and believe in the social order.

2. An Analysis of the Field of Agricultural Relations

In a highly industrialized and urbanized civilization like ours in America, the farmer finds himself belonging to a minority group and involved in an amazing array of complex relationships. We can define the field of agricultural relations and the field of our concern no better than by a simple catalogue of the more significant of these relationships.

The typical American farmer finds that he must daily assume attitudes and adopt practices governing his relationship to:

His soil, livestock and equipment.

His farm unit as legally defined, owned and operated.

His market, including buyers, handlers, processors and consumers.

His neighbors, the local community

of which he is a part, and its institutions.

Some six million other farmers both in their aspect as his competitors in the market and as his confreres in a variety of voluntary farm organizations.

Several other organized economic groups, notably labor and industry.

Government, both local, state and increasingly federal.

World order, international relations and international trade in agricultural commodities.

Every one of these areas of relationship, however economic, political or sociological it may at first glance appear to be, proves on closer analysis to be loaded with ethical issues and problems. This is the area of concentration of the Agricultural Relations Department of C.S.A. It is vastly different from the function of the Town and Country Department of a home missions board whose responsibility is the stability and effectiveness of the rural church as an institution. Our problem is the ethics of the production, distribution and consumption of food and fiber. We follow them all the way from the farmer's field and barn to the consumer's table and wardrobe.

3. A Survey of Christian Teaching

A Christian program for Agricultural Relations requires the alignment of two series of factors: the practical day-by-day relationships of the farmer as listed above and the appropriate elements of Christian moral teaching. As we review the teachings of Christ and the doctrines of the Church from this point of view we find many which apply to agriculture. Among the more fundamental and by way of illustration we will cite here a few. (The scripture references following each paragraph are for the convenience of the reader who likes to buttress his doctrine by proof texts).

Stewardship. The Christian doctrine of stewardship applies to many levels of human behavior. One of its basic meanings is that the farmer is obligated to make careful and responsible use of the soil, the water and the forests which are given of God for the sustenance of the generations. Sound conservation, sound

development and sound use are all implied in stewardship. Both the private practices of farmers and national resources policy are involved. What we ask the farmer to do as a moral duty, we must enable him to do as a financial possibility. All consumers of food and wearers of clothing must share with the farmer the profound realization that "the earth is the Lord's." (Gen. 1:26; Gen. 2:15; Ps. 24:1; Ps. 104: 13-14; Acts 17: 22-25).

Family. Our Lord glorified the family and sanctified it. He cited it as the type of the divine relationship between God, "the Father" and us, "His children." Our patterns of agricultural production, of land tenure, of farm management, of rural community life, of marketing procedures, of federal planning must all be such as to insure the stability, the vitality and the integrity of the family. (Matt. 12: 46-50; Matt. 19: 3-6; Matt. 19: 13-14; Isa. 5: 8).

Freedom. Christianity has always taught the dignity and worth of the individual and his right to freedom. Christian freedom, however, has always to be understood within a framework of social responsibility. Christian agricultural relations, therefore, will work for a maximum of individual freedom, self-determination and self-reliance consistent with family, community and public welfare. It will insist equally that he who would remain free must exercise freedom responsibly. (John 8:32; II Cor. 3: 17; Gal. 5: 13-15; James 1: 25).

Justice. In the highly specialized economy of our time, great economic pressure groups have arisen. Each of these sprang originally from a cry for justice. Each gathers momentum in its drive for justice so that it tends to overleap justice into the area of special

CHRISTIAN AGRICULTURE

Christian Community can devote attention only occasionally to rural and agricultural affairs. If you want to keep abreast of the rapidly changing scene in farm legislation, farm organization policy, rural community development and Christian agricultural relations programs, you should be on the mailing list for CHRISTIAN AGRICULTURE. It is a monthly (five page) letter of news and personal comment written by Rev. Shirley E. Greene, Agricultural Relations Secretary, C. S. A. There is no subscription price. Contributions toward expenses are accepted. Names are added to the mailing list only on personal request addressed to Rev. Shirley E. Greene, Merom, Ind.

Read It In SOCIAL ACTION

- February—Power Politics and the Christian Conscience**
by Vernon H. Holloway
- March—Freedom of Enterprise and Social Control**
by Kenneth Underwood
- April—The Drinker and His Religion**
by Francis W. McPeck
- May—Development and Conservation of Natural Resources**
by Stephen Raushenbush
- June—Industrial Relations and the Christian Faith**
by Francis W. McPeck

privilege. A major responsibility of the church is to uphold the standard of justice as a measuring stick against which all the programs of the pressure groups may be judged. There will be times when such a program must exert itself in behalf of justice for the farmer in market place and in legislative halls. Again we may have to work for justice *within* agriculture as between big and small farmers, owners and tenants, dairymen and soybean raisers, etc. At other points we will have to demand justice *from* agriculture to its hired labor, to the consumer, etc. Ex. 20: 15; Amos 5: 21-24; Neh. 5; James 5: 1-6; Luke 6: 31).

Reconciliation. Justice assumes conflict and seeks a balance of interests and powers. Such conflicts exist within agriculture and between agricultural and other sectors of our economy. No good purpose is served by ignoring the conflict. Beyond justice, however, lies community. It is a fundamental duty of the church to provide a ministry of reconciliation in agricultural relations. To minimize conflict and to maximize community may be the greatest service the church can render to agriculture in our time. It will certainly be putting our energies at the disposal of our Lord's great commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Micah 4: 3-4; Matt. 5:9; Mat. 5: 23-24; Matt. 5:44; Rom. 12:21).

Mutual Aid. Another contribution to Christian community and to the Christian doctrine of goodwill can come from the encouragement of mutual aid. It is our responsibility to foster mutual aid not only at the level of neighbor and neighbor. We must stimulate the imagination of farmers to see the modern meanings of mutual aid in terms of cooperative selling and buying, socially constructive voluntary farmer's organizations, sound federal planning, international agreements facilitating the flow of agricultural goods. (Gen. 41: 28-36; Acts 4: 32-35; Gal. 6:2; James 1:27).

Abundant life. "I came," said our Lord, "that ye might have life and have

it more abundantly." In His own ministry, brief as it was, He illustrated the breadth of meaning in that saying. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, comforted the downcast, restored the mentally distressed, taught the ignorant, released the captive and saved the lost. His church, "the body of Christ" dare not be more limited in her areas of concern than her Master. "Man does not live by bread alone." True, but he does live by bread! Agricultural relations is not the whole meaning of the gospel, but it is one meaning of it. Else why were we taught to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread?"

Christian agricultural relations stands for full and abundant agricultural production, for such economic arrangements that abundance will be equitably distributed to all God's children, and for the assurance that the farmer shall be equitably compensated for his labor. (Deut. 8:7-14; Lev. 26: 3-6; Luke 4: 18; John 10:10; Matt. 25: 31-46).

4. A Program of Education and Action

Local—In the town and country churches of our fellowship we urge the formation of Small Discussion and Action groups. These are voluntary groups of 8-10 families meeting regularly in their homes, sponsored by the church,

seeking the good community through study, analysis, discussion, planning and commitment. (A full description may be had in "*A Handbook for Small Discussion and Action Groups*" available from the Agricultural Relations Office, Merom, Indiana).

Regional—The secretary spends the major portion of his time in the field meeting with state committees, holding schools, seminars, and institutes on state or regional bases, conducting hearings, forums, round-tables and otherwise seeking to arouse the church to its responsibility in agricultural relations.

National—An annual Rural Churchman's Seminar in Washington, D. C. and a monthly letter of news and personal comment called *Christian Agriculture* are characteristic features of a national educational program. In cooperation with C.S.A.'s Washington office, we also conduct a vigorous program of political action in behalf of those measures which according to our best judgment embody the type of agricultural relations herein described.

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The Reverend Shirley E. Greene has the distinction of being the only Agricultural Secretary employed by a Protestant denomination in America. He is on the staff of the Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches, and makes his home in Merom, Indiana.

AGRICULTURAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

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Rural Churchmen Meet

The fourth annual Rural Churchmen's Seminar recently brought 71 pastors and laymen together for four days in Washington, D. C. to study the processes of farm legislation. This Seminar was promoted by the Agricultural Relations Department of The Council for Social Action with the cooperation of C.S.A.'s Washington office and ten other denominational social education and action departments.

The program included presentations by spokesmen from the Departments of Agriculture, Interior and State, the national farm organizations, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the Public Affairs Institute, the C.I.O., and the National Farm Labor Union. Senators Aiken of Vermont and Anderson of New Mexico spoke to the Seminar. Each talk was followed by questions and discussion. Many delegates interviewed their own Senators and Representatives.

A good deal of attention was paid to the cruel irony of American food surpluses and world food needs. Opening and closing messages were given by Rev. Shirley E. Greene, Agricultural Relations Secretary of C.S.A. He emphasized the importance of rural churchmen understanding the way farm policy is formed, legalized and administered, the large ethical and spiritual factors involved in sound farm policy, and the need for Christian leadership to enter actively into the arena of public policy making.

The 71 delegates represented 9 denominations and 20 states. They were about one-third pastors, one-third laymen and women, and one-third seminary students. The seminary groups were from Lancaster E. and R. Seminary and Louisville Presbyterian. Total Congregational Christian attendance was 19; Evangelical and Reformed, 12.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Requests for regular mailings or additional copies for Congregational Christians should be addressed to Ray Gibbons, Director, Council for Social Action, 289 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, New York. Requests by Evangelical and Reformed, and others, as well as news items and communications, should be addressed to the Editor, Huber F. Klemme, Commission on Christian Social Action, 2969 West 25th Street, Cleveland 13, Ohio.

SOME DATES TO REMEMBER

A number of excellent educational opportunities present themselves during the spring and summer for those who desire to take advantage of them. Schools and institutes will provide training in various phases of Christian social action and churchmanship. Some of those which are especially commended to the pastors and lay people of our churches are the following:

May 22 to 26. WORKSHOP ON THE CITY CHURCH, McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois. Conducted by the Board of National Missions and the Commission on Christian Social Action of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Individual registration \$5, room \$4, meals estimated at \$3 per day. For information write to the Reverend H. R. Gebhardt, 1720 Chouteau Ave., St. Louis 3, Missouri.

June 21. SOCIAL ACTION SEMINAR, Collegeville, Pennsylvania. Conducted by the Commission on Christian Social Action in conjunction with the General Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. For information, write to the Reverend Huber F. Klemme, 2969 West 25th St., Cleveland 13, Ohio.

June 26 to July 8. RACE RELATIONS INSTITUTE, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee. Conducted by the Race Relations Department, American Missionary Association. For information, write to President Charles S. Johnson, Fisk University, Nashville 8, Tennessee.

June 26 to July 29. SUMMER SCHOOL FOR MINISTERS ON THE CHURCH AND ECONOMIC LIFE, University of Chicago. Sponsored by the University in cooperation with the Department of the Church and Economic Life of the Federal Council of Churches. Total expense approximately \$165. For information write to the social action agency of your own denomination.

July 3 to 8. SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL ACTION, conducted by the Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches at the Massachusetts Congregational Conference grounds. For ministers, social action chairmen and others interested. Cost, \$30. Inquire from the Reverend Ray Gibbons, 289 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.

July 3 to 21. WORKSHOP ON GROUP DYNAMICS IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH, conducted by the Federated Theological Faculty of the University of Chicago. To train forty persons in leadership skills. Inquire from Prof. Ross Snyder, 5757 University Ave., Chicago 37, Illinois.

July 8 to August 4. SUMMER SCHOOL OF ALCOHOL STUDIES, Yale University, New Haven, Conn. Tuition for ministers, physicians, teachers, and welfare workers, \$225. Scholarship assistance available. Applications, available from denominational

social action agencies, must be submitted by April 28.

July 10 to 14. INTERDENOMINATIONAL INSTITUTE ON RACIAL AND CULTURAL RELATIONS, Eden Theological Seminary, Webster Groves, Missouri. Sponsored by the Interdenominational Committee for Cooperative Work in Race Relations, in consultation with the Department of Race Relations of the Federal Council of Churches. For information write to Dr. J. Oscar Lee, 297 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y., or to your denominational race relations secretary.

July 10 to 22. INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS INSTITUTE FOR CHURCH LEADERS, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin. Tuition, room and board (exclusive of Sunday meals), \$70. Information from E. E. Schwarztrauber, University of Wisconsin School for Workers, 1214 West Johnson St., Madison, Wisconsin.

August 7 to 11. INTERDENOMINATIONAL INSTITUTE ON RACIAL AND CULTURAL RELATIONS, Lincoln University, Pennsylvania. Sponsored by the Interdenominational Committee for Cooperative Work in Race Relations. For information write to Dr. J. Oscar Lee, Race Relations Department, Federal Council of Churches, 297 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.

A group is planning to study conditions in England, France, Germany, the Low Countries, and Italy this summer under the leadership of Herman F. Reissig, International Relations Secretary of the Council for Social Action. The group will leave New York about June 15 and return about August 15.

For further information about costs, itinerary, and general program, write to Mr. Reissig at 289 Fourth Ave., New York 10, New York.

Good Reading

Ralph A. Felton, whose studies of the salaries of rural pastors and of factors which influence students to enter the ministry received widespread attention, has published a study of Negro churches and Negro homes in the South. It may be ordered, at 40 cents per copy, from the Rural Church Department, Drew Seminary, Madison, New Jersey.